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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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**INFORMATION TO MEMBERS
AVAILABLE SELF-PACED VIRTUAL SPS COURSES
JULY 2021 WTO SPS COMMITTEE MEETING**

COMMUNICATION FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The following document, received on 9 June 2021, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of the United States of America.

1. The United States is hosting a virtual SPS side event, "Improved SPS Capacity Through Distance Learning", which will be held on Thursday, 15 July 2021, at 13:30 hours CEST, during which the United States will introduce a new, free, web-based SPS training resource.
2. These online SPS courses, which are open and available to everyone, are a powerful tool for training regulators, farmers, food and agricultural sector business operators, international agricultural development professionals, and other stakeholders in the development and enhancement of modern plant health, animal health, and food safety systems. The event will highlight recently added courses on animal health and food safety, offer a step-by-step demonstration on how to use this online resource, and share lessons learned from implementation.
3. There are sixteen courses available that cover a wide variety of SPS topics and support the integration of SPS principles along agricultural value chains. The courses provide students with information on how to incorporate and use science-based risk analysis concepts and tools to address plant health, animal health, and food safety challenges.
4. Topics include plant pest surveillance, plant pest identification systems, plant pest inspections, animal health disease surveillance, and the essential components of modern food safety systems.
5. The online courses are open to everyone and self-paced and select learning topics are available in multiple languages including English, French, Spanish, and Dari. Courses can be accessed online at <http://www.spscourses.com/>, and participants will be prompted to complete a brief enrollment process.
6. The online courses were developed by the United States Food Safety Network (FSN), in partnership with Texas A&M University. The Food Safety Network is a US Government (USG) interagency collaboration between the US Department of Agriculture, the US Agency for International Development, and the US Food and Drug Administration. The online courses aim to advance SPS regulatory capacity building in support of the USG Global Food Security Strategy goals of improving food security, reducing poverty, and reducing malnutrition.
7. The FSN and Texas A&M University introduced fourteen plant health courses to the international community in 2018 and published the food safety and animal health courses in Spring 2021. Since their launch, these courses have been accessed by more than 1,500 users in over 100 countries.
8. These online courses have allowed the United States to continue to provide SPS technical assistance, even as the COVID-19 pandemic has limited in-person engagement.

9. The online courses were shared with the international SPS community during Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) Working Group meetings and the United States welcomes the opportunity to share more information about <http://www.spscourses.com/> at the side event on 15 July.
